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## **Senate approves benefit fund for fallen officers**

**Lansing** – Legislation to create a fund for survivors of public safety officers killed or permanently disabled in the line of duty won unanimous approval in the Michigan Senate, Sen. Michelle McManus, R-Lake Leelanau, announced today.

“These types of tragedies occur far too frequently, and the survivors often have little or no financial resources when a loved one is lost,” McManus said. “We have an obligation to the families of slain officers to help them in their time of need.”

House Bill 4178 creates a state-funded death benefit for state-employed public safety officers. The bill provides for a one-time payment of \$25,000 to the spouse, dependents, estate or caregiver of a public safety officer who dies or is permanently disabled in the line of duty. Law enforcement officers, firefighters, rescue squad members, and ambulance crewmembers all would be eligible for the benefit.

McManus supported an amendment to the bill to include local public safety officers in the fund and sponsored an amendment that makes families of officers killed or permanently disabled in the line of duty on or after Oct. 1, 2003, retroactively eligible for the benefit.

Clare County Sheriff’s Deputy Kevin Sherwood was killed Oct. 9, 2003, when a driver traveling the wrong way on the expressway hit his patrol car head-on. The sole provider for his family, Sherwood left behind a wife and children.

“I’m very proud of the Senate and House for creating this fund for officers,” said Clare County Sheriff Jeffery V. Goyt. “Having dealt with the loss of Kevin and trying to help his family through their time of sorrow, I’m glad to see that the Legislature took steps to help the families of fallen officers.”

On Feb. 16, 2004, Detroit police officers Jennifer Fettig and Matthew Bowens were killed during an early morning routine traffic stop.

Michigan is one of only a few states without a state-funded death benefit for state-employed public safety officers. The fund would be created within the Department of Treasury and money that remains in the fund would not lapse into the general fund.

The bill now returns to the House for concurrence.

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